



# ASSURING TEACHER QUALITY IN MARYLAND

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## ***What is Maryland doing to strengthen teacher certification?***

In July 2000, Maryland began requiring high qualifying scores on the Praxis basic skills, content, and teaching skills assessments for initial teacher certification. Maryland set basic skills qualifying scores of 177 in math and reading, second highest in the country, and a score of 173 in writing, fourth highest nationally. As of July 1, 2002, candidates may meet each of these qualifying scores or the composite score of 527. The State continually reviews Maryland candidate performance to consider raising the qualifying scores. Teacher candidates from states that do not require the Praxis assessments must take them to become certified in Maryland, and out-of-state candidates who have already taken the exams must meet Maryland's qualifying scores. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the deans and directors of teacher education in two- and four-year institutions are working together to develop an array of supports for candidates preparing for the basic skills assessments.

## ***Does Maryland encourage teachers to obtain National Board Certification?***

Maryland recognizes the completion of the certification process for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a valuable professional development experience. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, has established rigorous standards and assessments for what accomplished teachers should know. The certification is acknowledgment that a teacher is highly accomplished, having met challenging professional teacher standards as evidenced by performance-based assessments. Certification is offered in many teaching areas. Maryland awards certificate renewal credit for completing the process and earning the certification. The Maryland General Assembly has enacted a Fee Incentive Program to support teachers seeking National Board Certification and matches local school system financial incentives up to \$2000.

## ***How does Maryland certification help assure teacher quality?***

For entry to teaching, the Maryland certification system requires teacher candidates to meet state qualifying scores in basic skills, content knowledge, and teaching skills assessments. Teacher candidates completing Maryland approved certification programs in the State's colleges and universities meet state and state-recognized national standards.

The Maryland certification system requires satisfactory classroom performance and career-long professional development for teachers. Teachers are required to renew their certification periodically at various stages in their career. Either during their preparation to enter teaching or during their professional development, candidates and teachers must complete state required reading courses.

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## ***How is Maryland changing the way students prepare for careers in teaching?***

The State Superintendent of Schools, the Secretary of MHEC, and the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland co-chair Maryland's Partnership in Teaching and Learning K-16. This partnership has developed a plan to create 240 professional development schools in the state, allowing every teacher candidate to do an extensive internship in one of these specially designed locations. Interns will be assessed through a developmental portfolio review process. A monitoring and assessment team will ensure that exit portfolio requirements are fully met before recommending initial teacher certification in Maryland. Additionally, teacher candidates must demonstrate technology skills according to the Maryland Technology Standards.

The State Department of Education and MHEC have worked together to redesign the way public colleges and universities in Maryland prepare students to teach. The recommendations of the joint task force being implemented include:

- a solid foundation in academic disciplines for all teacher candidates
- multiple paths to teacher certification
- school-based professional training
- opportunities for teacher candidates to teach children with diverse backgrounds in culturally diverse settings
- systemic linkage between teacher education redesign and school improvement efforts
- accountability and assessment throughout teacher education programs
- a view of learning to teach as a career-long process and the importance of each teacher having a professional development plan which supports his/her growth, and
- diversity of ethnicity, gender and age in Maryland's teacher population.

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## ***How is Maryland addressing the shortage of teachers?***

Maryland is taking an aggressive multi-faceted approach to ensure that schools have the number of teachers necessary to provide a quality education for all students. Two scholarship programs are available to teacher candidates: the Christa McAuliffe Memorial Teacher Education Award for candidates preparing to teach in a critical shortage area and the Maryland HOPE Teacher Scholarship. Maryland passed legislation supporting mentoring programs for newly hired teachers, re-employment of retired teachers and principals, tax credits to reduce the financial burden of graduate work, stipends for teachers who achieve national certification, and signing bonuses for new teachers.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) has approved an Associate of Arts in Teaching degree for community college students for a complete transfer into Maryland four-year teacher education institutions. This early-decision approach will increase the number of teacher candidates being prepared in Maryland institutions. In 2001, MSDE initiated the Maryland Initiative for New Teachers (MINT) as a retention strategy.